

Telluride comes of age

Tucked-away town gains star status

By KATHRYN STRAACH
Dallas Morning News

TELLURIDE, Colo. — If Butch Cassidy were to return today to Telluride, site of his first bank robbery, he just might bypass the money-lending institution. After all, tiny tucked-away Telluride is the hideaway where Hollywood stars with silver-lined pockets have been retreating in recent years.

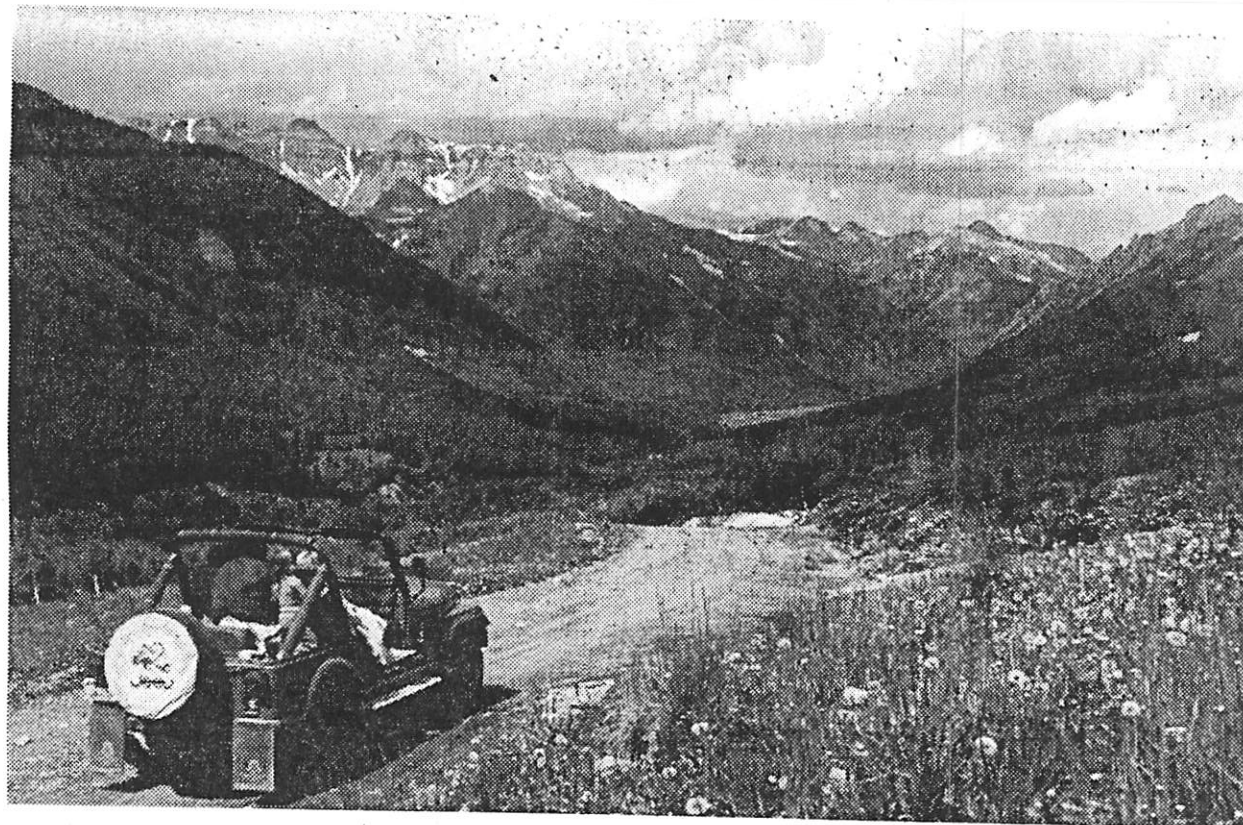
But don't tell anyone. Town officials don't like to discuss their famous residents.

"We prefer not to give out that information," says Barb Loken, communications manager for the Telluride Chamber Resort Association. "We don't want to exploit them. Some have kids going to school here."

But just take a ride up Chair Lift 10 and you'll hear people abuzz, pointing out Oprah Winfrey's and Sylvester Stallone's opulent log and stone mountain chalets. Back in town, Tom Cruise is building his retreat.

And this is the place where model Christie Brinkley crashed a few days before Easter in a heli-skiing accident, narrowly escaping serious injury. She is reported to be hanging out here these days after splitsville from songster Billy Joel.

Even the Coors mountain



Telluride, Colo., is gaining a reputation as a winter and summer resort for the rich and famous.

Among its residents: Oprah Winfrey, Sylvester Stallone, Tom Cruise and Christie Brinkley.

resort with a nonpretentious, laid-back attitude. Loken, an Aspen resident in the '60s, agrees there are some similarities, but Telluride has its own identity, its own history.

"We're a lot more isolated," Loken says. "A big mountain range, the Rockies, separates us (from the other resorts). Aspen is plopped right in the middle of everything. There aren't any four-lane highways leading to Telluride. You have to really want to get here."

This is true. Telluride is in southwest Colorado on Colorado Highway 145 in San Miguel County, nestled in a granite box canyon along the San Miguel River. It's 67 miles south of Montrose, 127 miles southeast of Grand Junction, 125 miles north of

considered itself busy that week.

But Telluride stays consistently busy, yet low-key, the year around. It attracts as many people in the summer as in the winter, and it dubs itself the Festival Capital of Colorado — with good reason. From mid-May to the end of September, the town hosts a festival each weekend — except one. Truth is, the only reason that weekend, July 15-17, wasn't scheduled for a festival is that the town just wanted a weekend off.

As if there isn't enough to do already with standard summertime fun, including hiking, mountain biking, golf, four-wheeling, horseback riding, fishing, river rafting, backpacking and camping.

Room rates in the summer are

more people than 10 years ago.

"We only have 3,900 pillows in town and in the mountain village," says Loken, pointing out there are no major projects planned. "We probably could use more hotel rooms."

Although construction in town is apparent, it's happening on previously occupied spots. The boundaries of both the town and the mountain-village resort already have been established, Loken says, so the town is not expanding.

Most of the growth is in the mountain-village resort, five miles from Telluride. The mid-mountain community with a European feel was established in 1987. (This is where many of the stars are building.) The majority of

Americans abroad more

Knight-Ridder Newspapers

Despite a weakening dollar that makes goods and services abroad more expensive, tourism experts say Americans are traveling abroad more now than ever.

However, travelers are buying package tours in greater numbers, hoping to lock in the price of the trip early and avoid getting soaked overseas by expensive hotel, transportation and meal costs.

"Packages are popular because all the costs are included," Travel Industry Association of America (TIAA) spokesperson Shawn Flaherty said last week. "There are no surprises that way."

Through the first five months of this year, the sale of international tour packages nationally climbed 24.7 percent from what it was during the same period last year, according to AAA Travel Services.

"When you buy in advance, your prices are fixed," said AAA Michigan Travel spokeswoman Diana Johnson. "That's a definite reason why packages have gone up."

Also rising is the amount of money Americans are spending on international travel.

Last year, Americans spent \$52 billion traveling abroad, compared to \$36.6 billion in 1987, according to the TIAA. This year we're expected to spend \$55.4 billion.

"You have people locking in value at a certain price early on in the

